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Mahabharata-20

ARJUNA'S QUEST FOR WEAPONS

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Veda Vyasa's Epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya—great-grandson of Vyasa—and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

The twentieth session of our rendering of Vaishampayana's recital of Vyasa's epic, the Mahabharata, described how Arjuna helped by his knowledge of the secret art of 'Pratismriti' (a branch of yogic knowledge) and his penance, pleased Indra, Shiva and other gods and acquired celestial weapons from them. The session ended with Indra instructing Arjuna to proceed to Swargaloka to perform some duties for the devas. Indra asked him to await Matali who would take him there in the celestial chariot.

*

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Mahabharata-20

ARJUNA'S QUEST FOR WEAPONS

BIDDEN BY YUDHISHTHIRA, ARJUNA PREPARED TO LEAVE ON HIS QUEST OF ACQUIRING CELESTIAL WEAPONS WITH THE HELP OF THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE OF PRATISMRITI. HE BURNED WITHIN WITH THE DESIRE TO OBTAIN THE WEAPONS FROM INDRA AND SLAY THE SONS OF DHRITARASHTRA.

"HE EQUIPPED HIMSELF WITH THE GANDEEVA *, TWO INEXHAUSTIBLE QUIVERS, ARMOURS, FINGERGUARDS AND A LEATHER ARM-BAND.

"HE THEN OFFERED OBLATION TO THE FIRE GOD AND GOLD COINS TO THE BRAHMANAS. THE LATTER BLESSED HIM, SAYING:

PROCEED ON YOUR MISSION. VICTORY WILL BE YOURS.

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* NAME OF ARJUNA'S BOW.

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"SEEING ARJUNA IN HIS WAR-LIKE ATTIRE, TAKING LEAVE OF OTHERS, DRAUPADI SAID:

O MIGHTY DHANANJAYA!* MAY THE WISHES OF YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR OWN AMBITIONS BE FULFILLED!

AFTER YOU GO IN QUEST OF THE WEAPONS, YOUR BROTHERS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REMEMBER YOUR VALOUR AGAIN AND AGAIN. WE WILL FIND SOLACE NEITHER IN INDULGENCE NOR IN WEALTH.

I PRAY TO VASU, RUDRA, ADITYA, THE MARUTS AND ALL OTHER GODS— MAY THEY LOOK AFTER YOUR WELL-BEING.

AFTER DRAUPADI BECAME SILENT, ARJUNA CIRCUMAMBULATED HIS BROTHERS AND DEPARTED ON THE JOURNEY.

Sri Vidyabharathi Trust, Chennai. Digitized by eGangotri

* CONQUEROR OF WEALTH (ARJUNA).

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"EQUIPPED WITH THE YOGIC KNOWLEDGE OF PRATISMRITI, ARJUNA JOURNEYED AS SPEEDILY AS THE MIND AND REACHED IN A DAY'S TIME THE HOLY HIMALAYAS, THE ABODE OF THE GODS.

"WALKING INCESSANTLY OVER THE HIMALAYAS AND THE GANDHAMADANA MOUNTAIN, HE ARRIVED AT INDRAKEELA. SUDDENLY HE HEARD—

STOP!

"THE PANDAVA LOOKED AROUND AND SAW AN ASCETIC WITH MATTED HAIR SITTING UNDER A TREE. HIS THIN, TAWNY-COLOURED BODY WAS GLOWING WITH A HEAVENLY RADIANCE.

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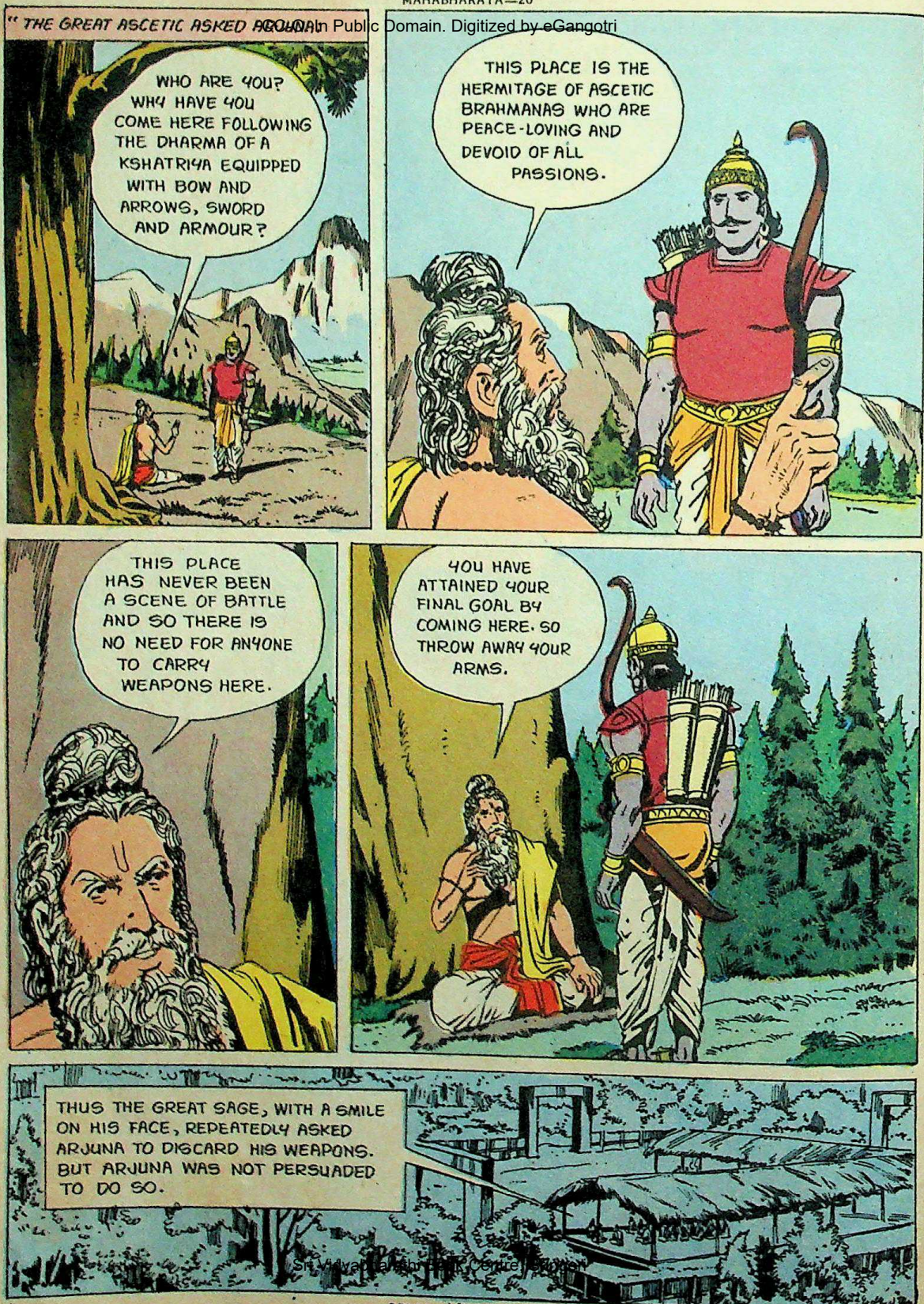

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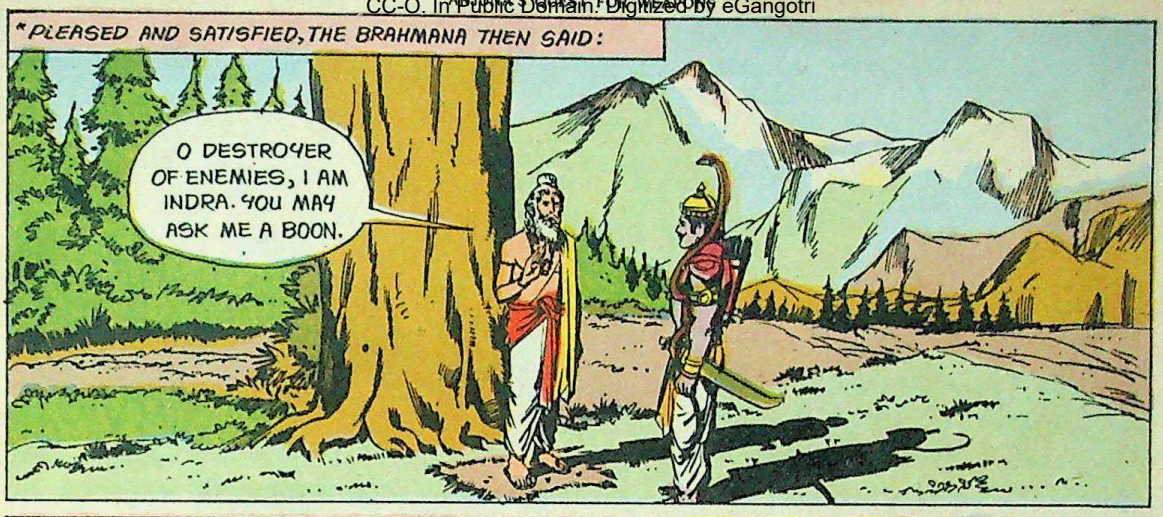

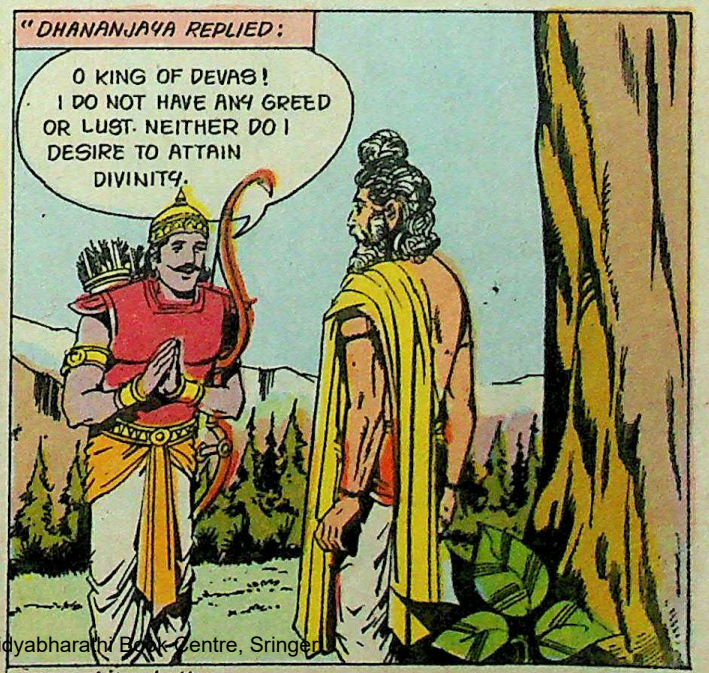

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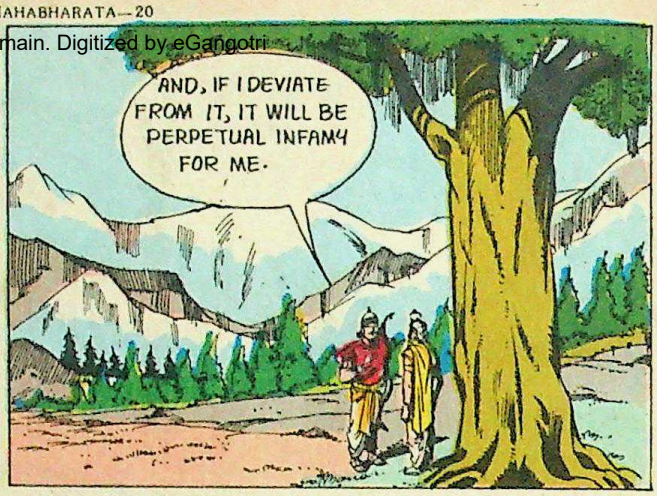

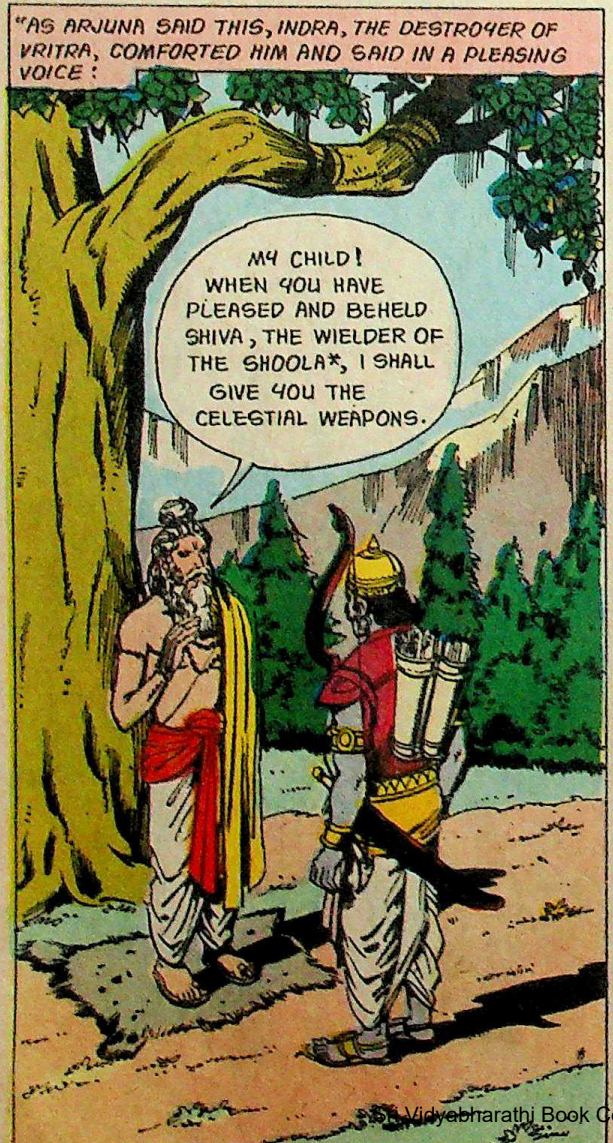

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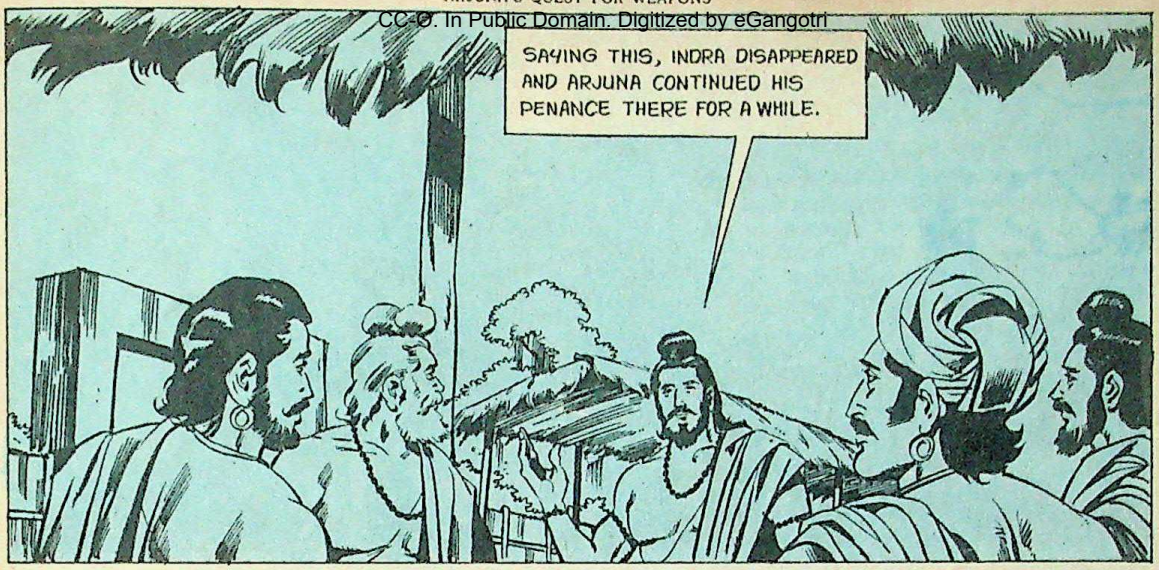

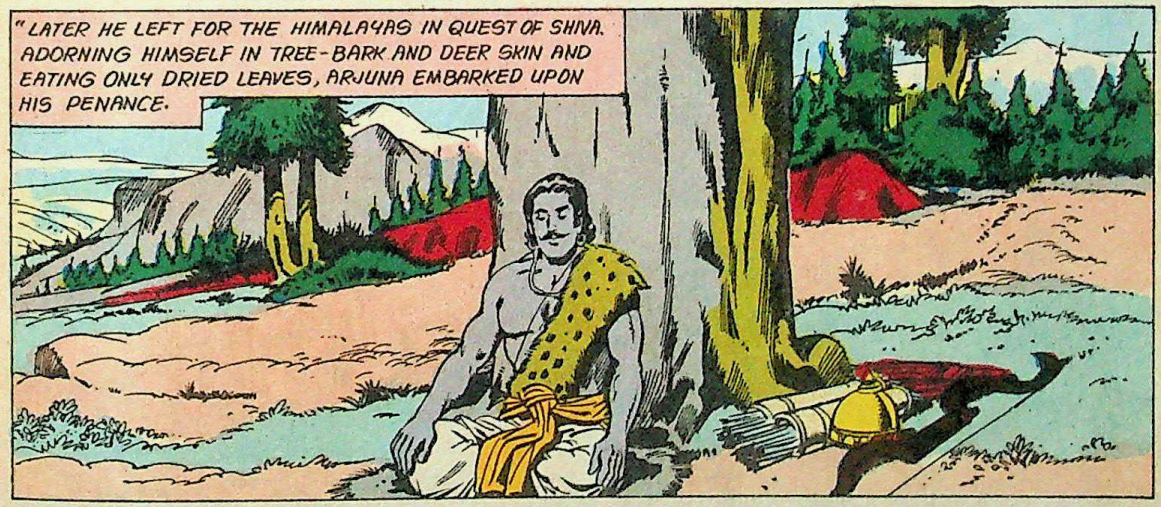

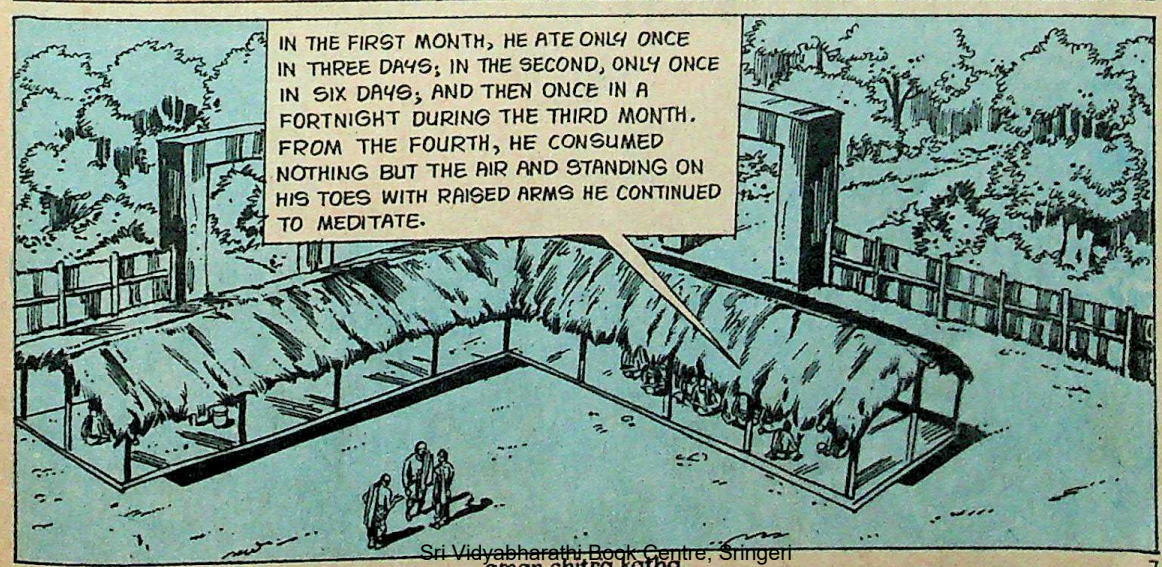

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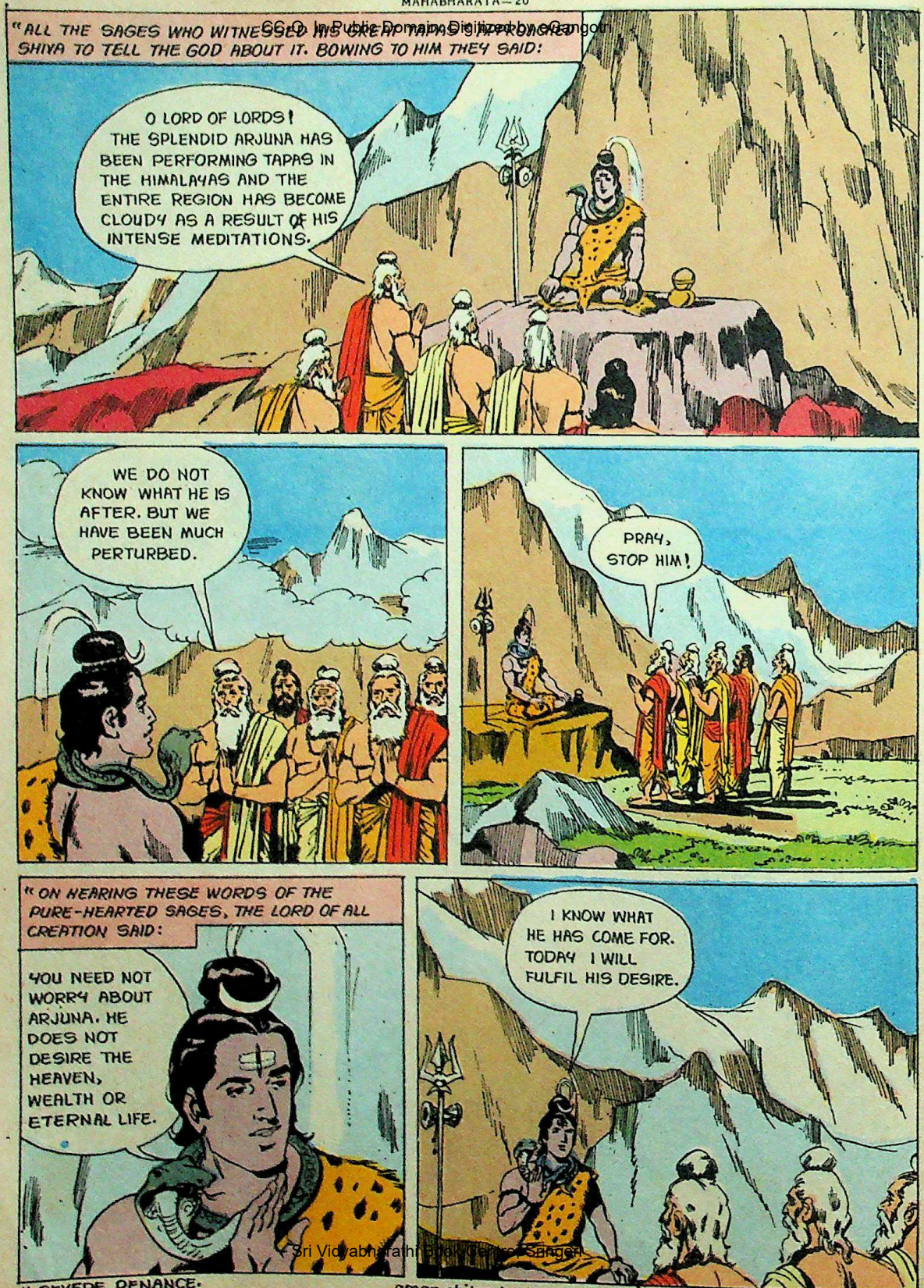

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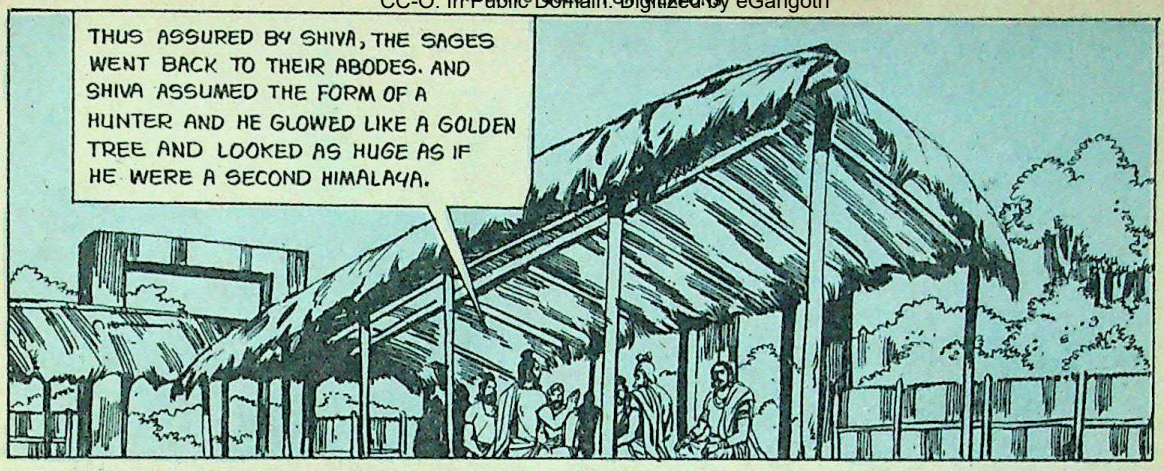

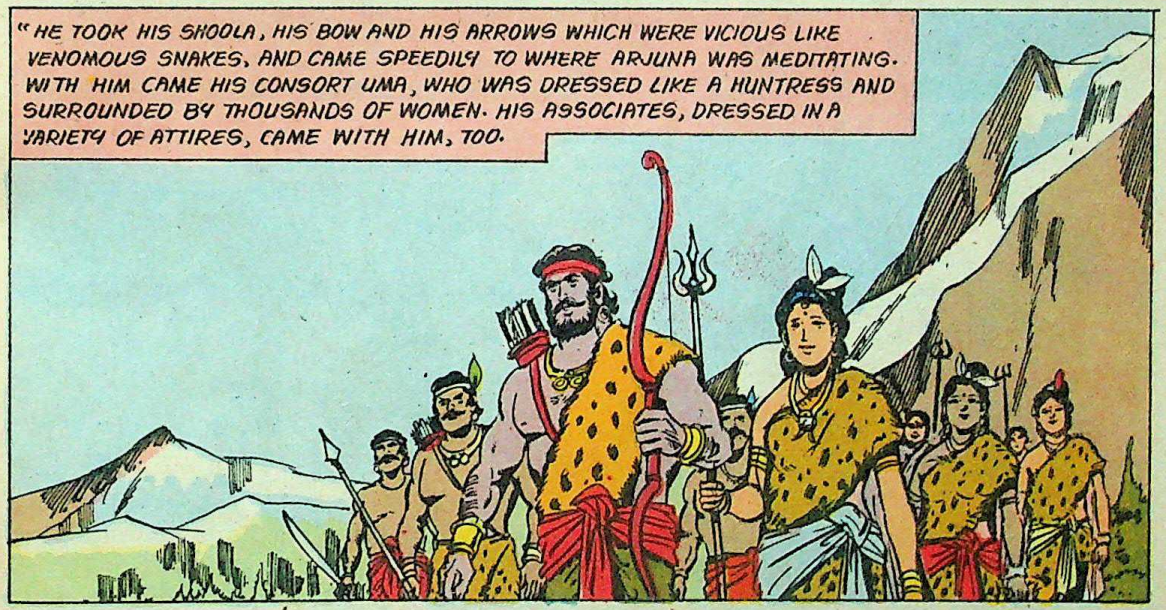

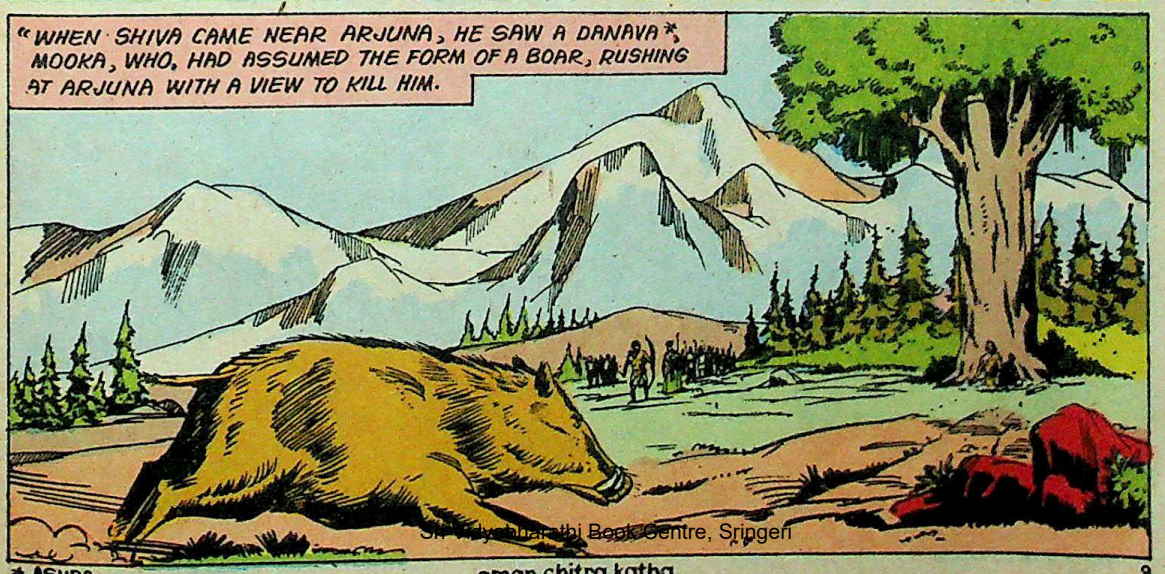

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* ASURA

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"AND SEEING THIS ARJUNA PICKED UP HIS GANDEEVA, MOUNTED ON IT HIS SNAKE-LIKE ARROW AND SAID TO THE BOAR:

O WICKED ONE! I HAVE CAUSED YOU NO HARM AND YET YOU WANT TO KILL ME.

FOR THIS I AM GOING TO SEND YOU TO THE ABODE OF DEATH.

"BUT JUST THEN SHIVA, IN THE GUISE OF A HUNTER STOPPED ARJUNA FROM SHOOTING AND SAID:

O ASCETIC! I'M THE ONE WHO FIRST SPOTTED THIS BOAR, LUMINOUS LIKE INDRAKEEL.

"WITHOUT PAYING ANY HEED TO HIM, ARJUNA SENT AN ARROW AT THE BOAR.

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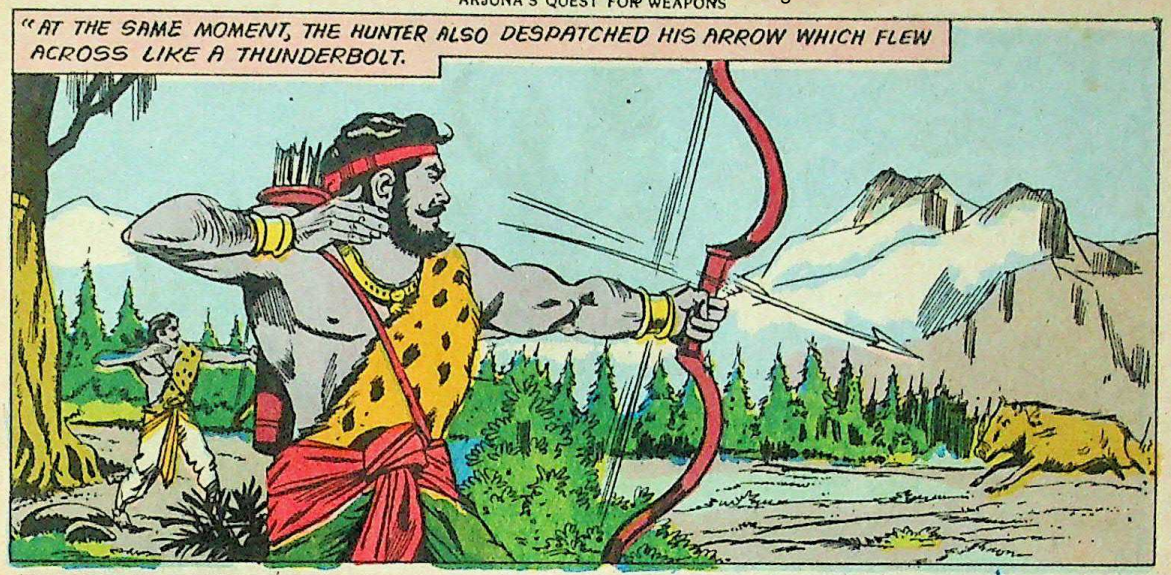

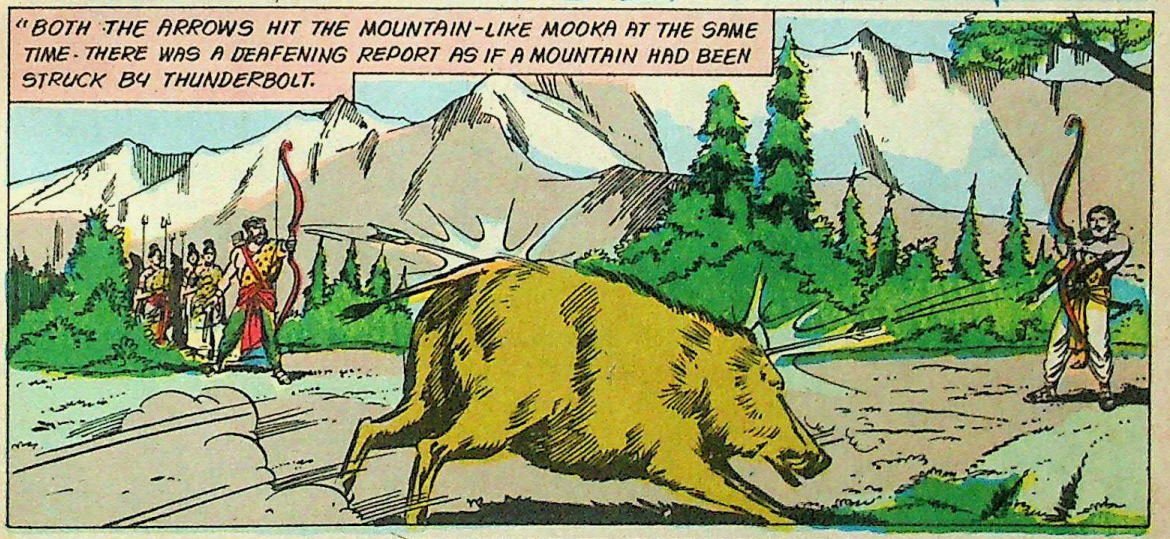

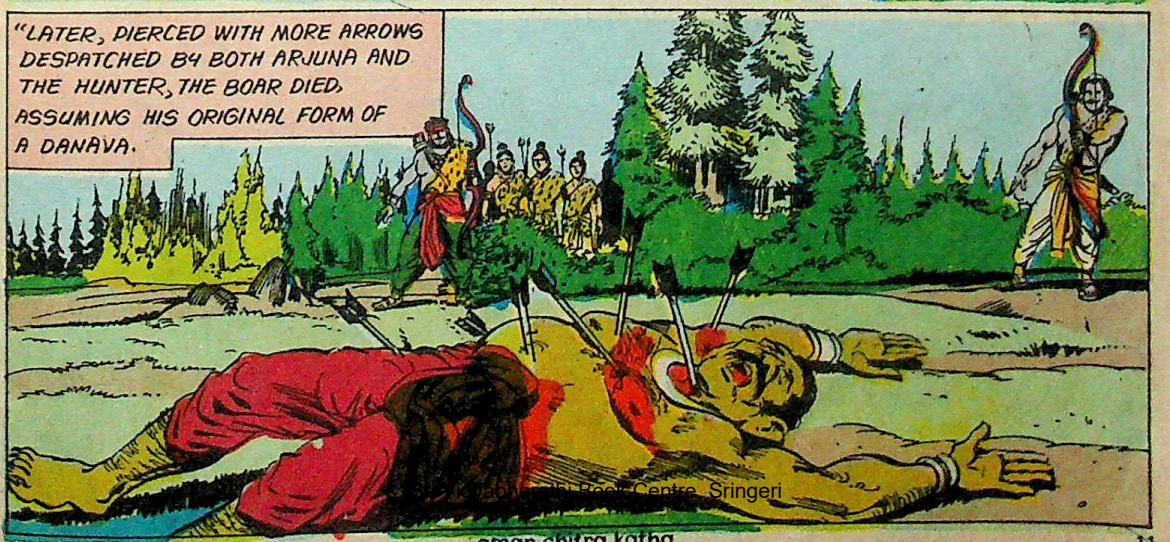

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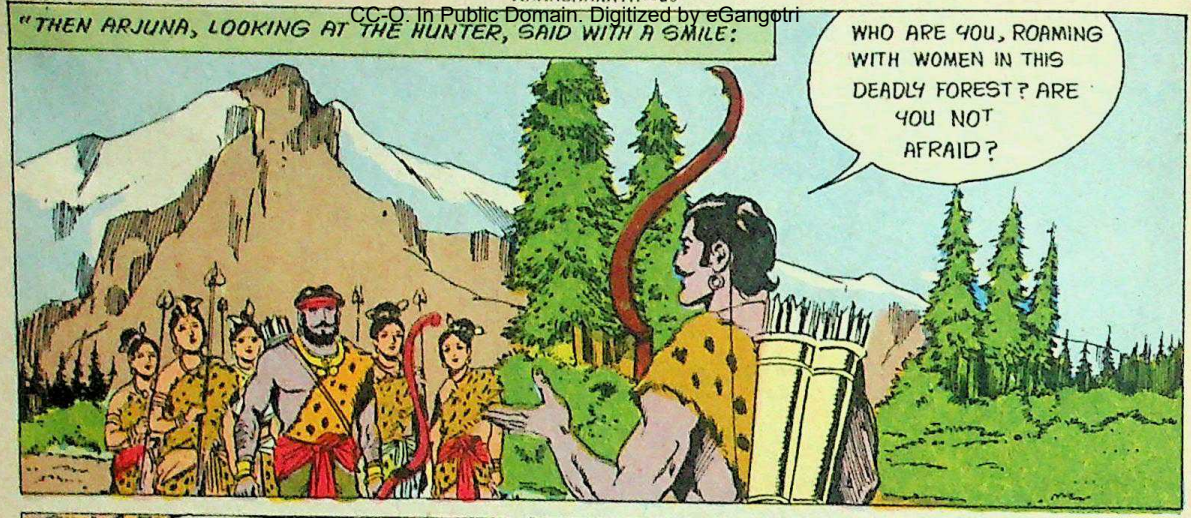
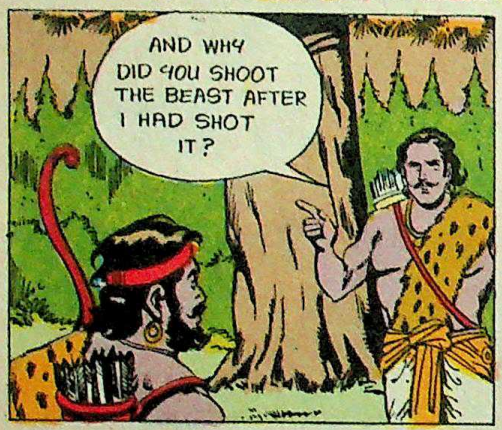
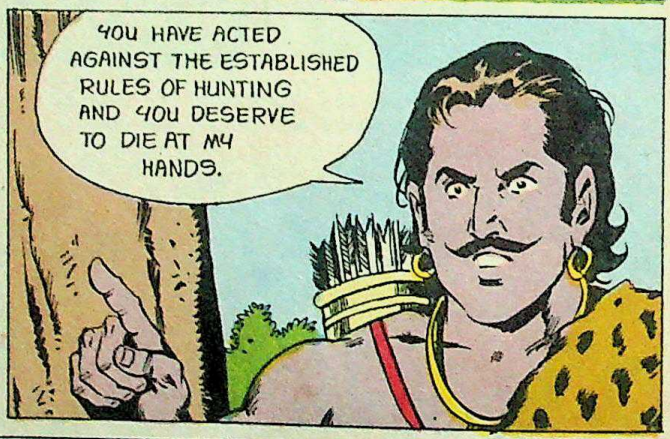
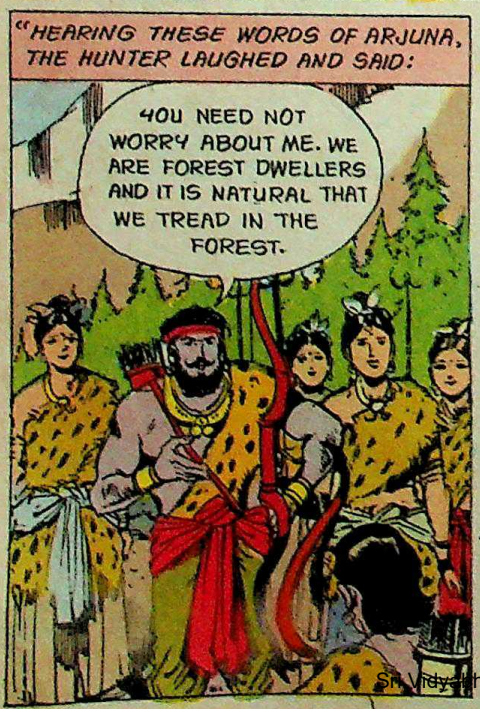
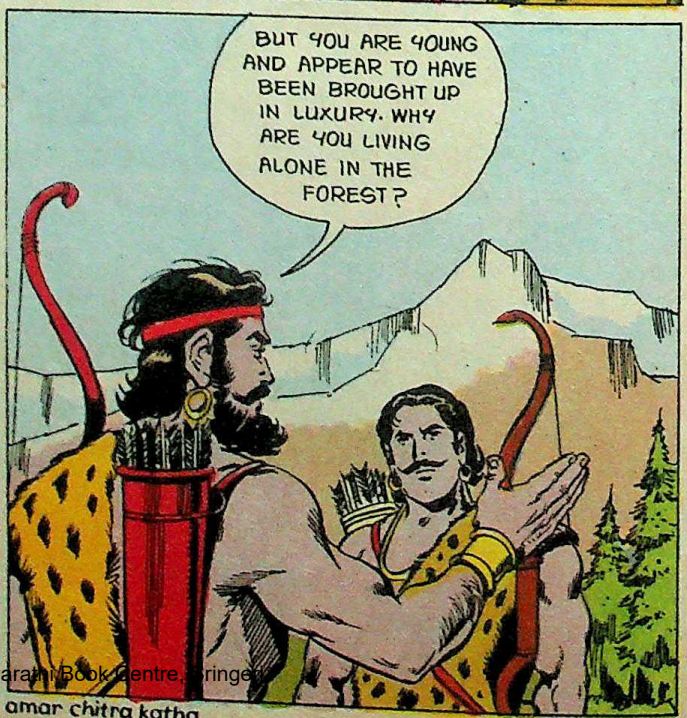






"HEARING THESE WORDS OF ARJUNA, THE HUNTER LAUGHED AND SAID:





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ANGERED BY THESE WORDS, ARJUNA, STARTED SHOOTING HIS ARROWS. THE HUNTER, PLEASED AT HEART, EASILY CONTAINED THEM.

"AND HE SAID:

TRY AGAIN! TRY AGAIN! THE SHARPEST OF YOUR ARROWS.

"THEN, THE TWO ATTACKED EACH OTHER WITH SNAKE-LIKE ARROWS.

"LORD SHIVA EASILY ABSORBED THE RAIN OF ARROWS RELEASED BY ARJUNA AND REMAINED UNHURT AND UNMOVED LIKE A MOUNTAIN.

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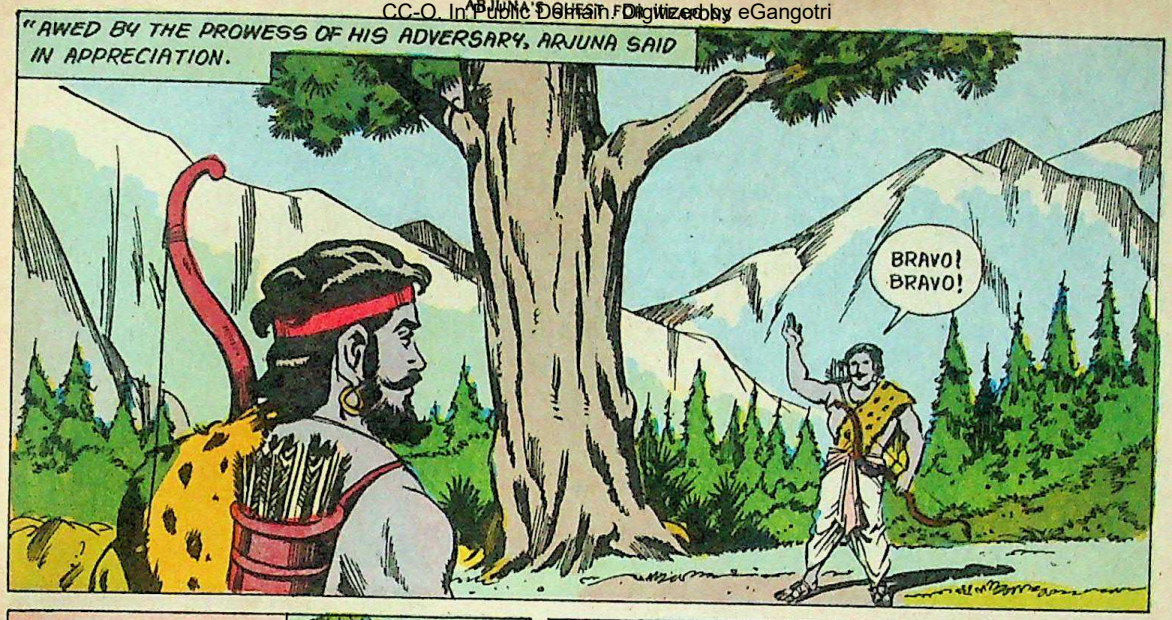

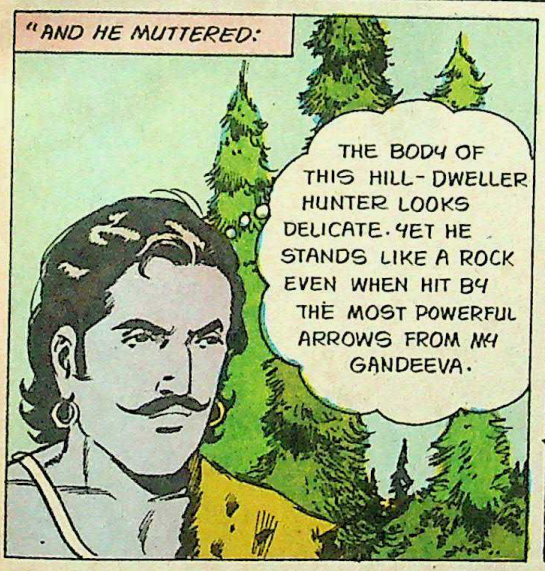

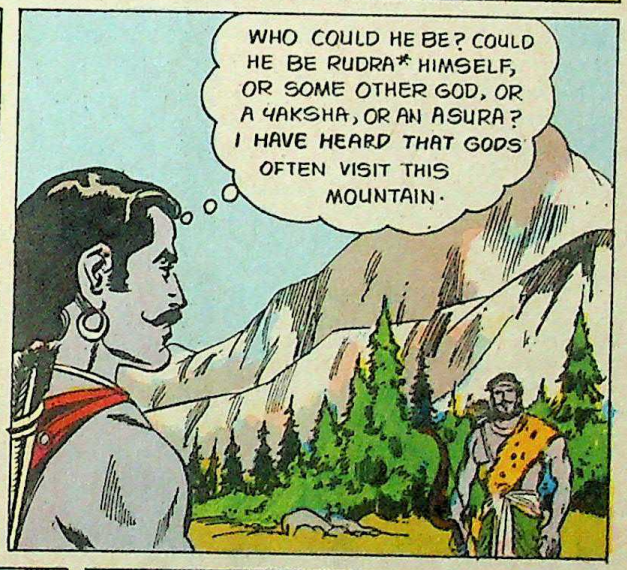

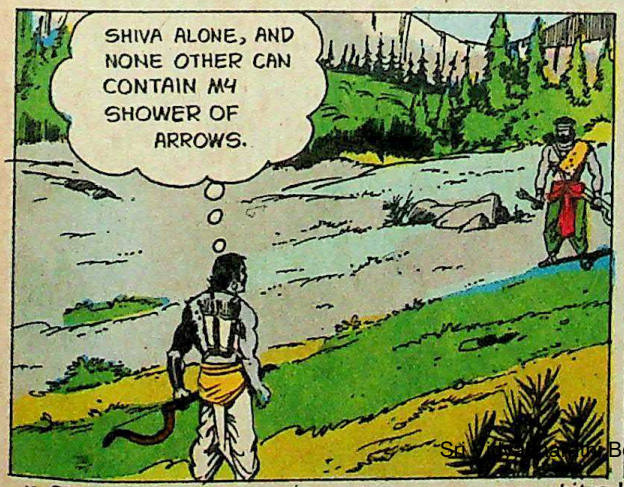

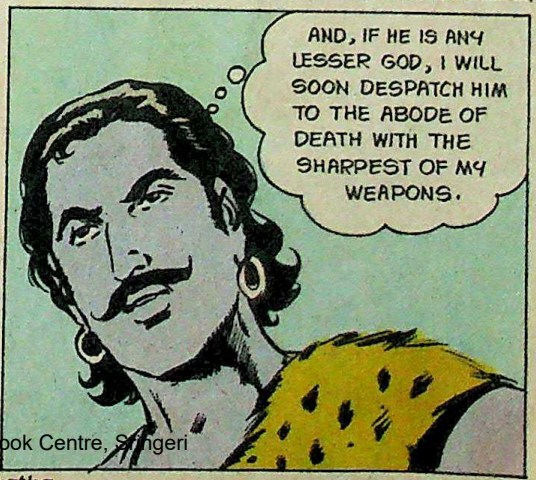

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* SHIVA

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THINKING THUS, O MONARCH, ARJUNA ASSAILED THE HUNTER WITH A SHOWER OF ARROWS WHICH PIERCED THE LATTER LIKE THE RAYS OF THE SUN. BUT THE WIELDER OF SHOOLA ABSORBED ALL OF THEM IN THE MANNER A MOUNTAIN ABSORBS SHOWERS OF ROCKS.

"SOON ARJUNA NEARLY EXHAUSTED HIS ARROWS AND BECAME GREATLY ALARMED. HE REMEMBERED THAT HIS TWO QUIVERS PRESENTED BY AGNI AT THE TIME OF THE KHANDAVA-DAHANA WERE INEXHAUSTIBLE.

"HE AGAIN WONDERED:

WHO COULD BE THIS HUNTER WHO IS NOT AFFECTED BY MY ARROWS?

LET ME DESTROY HIM WITH THE TIP OF MY BOW.

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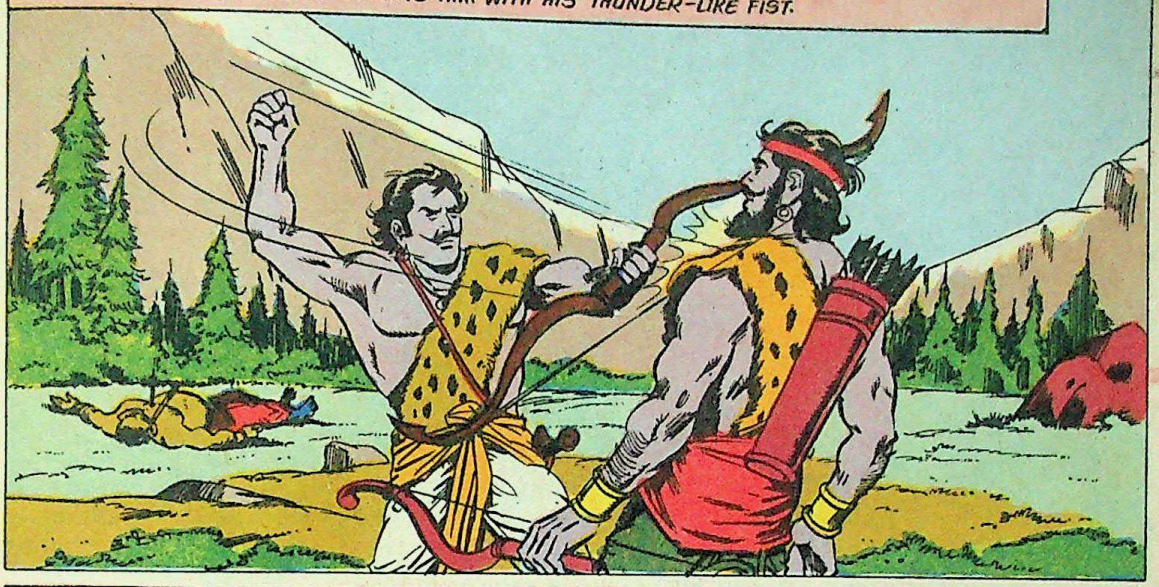
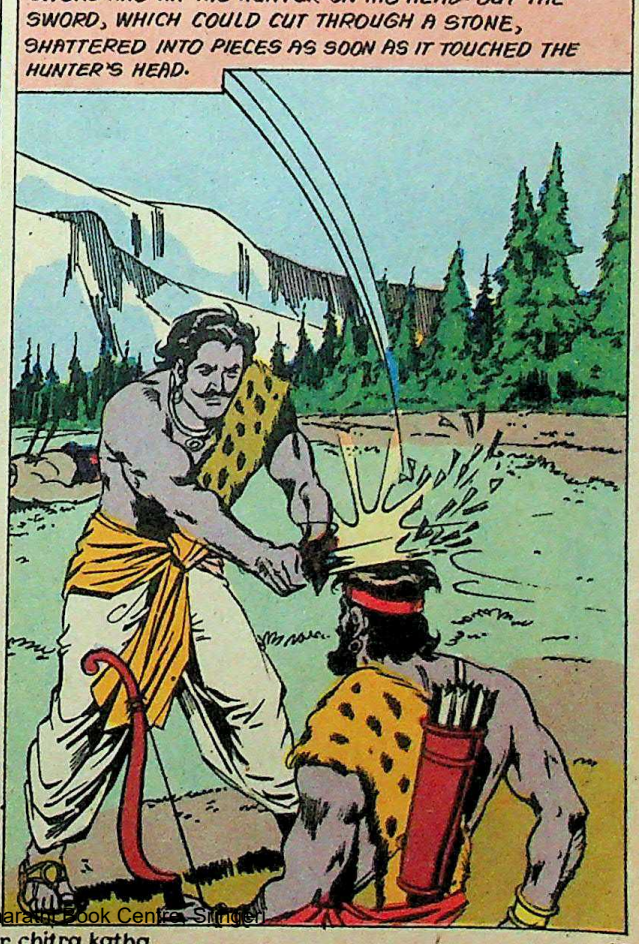
"THINKING THUS, ARJUNA ATTACKED THE HUNTER WITH HIS BOW AND ENCLOSING HIM WITHIN THE BOW-STRING, STARTED HITTING HIM WITH HIS THUNDER-LIKE FIST.



"THE HUNTER SNATCHED AWAY ARJUNA'S CELESTIAL BOW AND HAD IT CONCEALED IN HIMSELF.

"THEN ARJUNA, DESIROUS OF ENDING THE BATTLE, TOOK A SWORD AND HIT THE HUNTER ON HIS HEAD. BUT THE SWORD, WHICH COULD CUT THROUGH A STONE, SHATTERED INTO PIECES AS SOON AS IT TOUCHED THE HUNTER'S HEAD.



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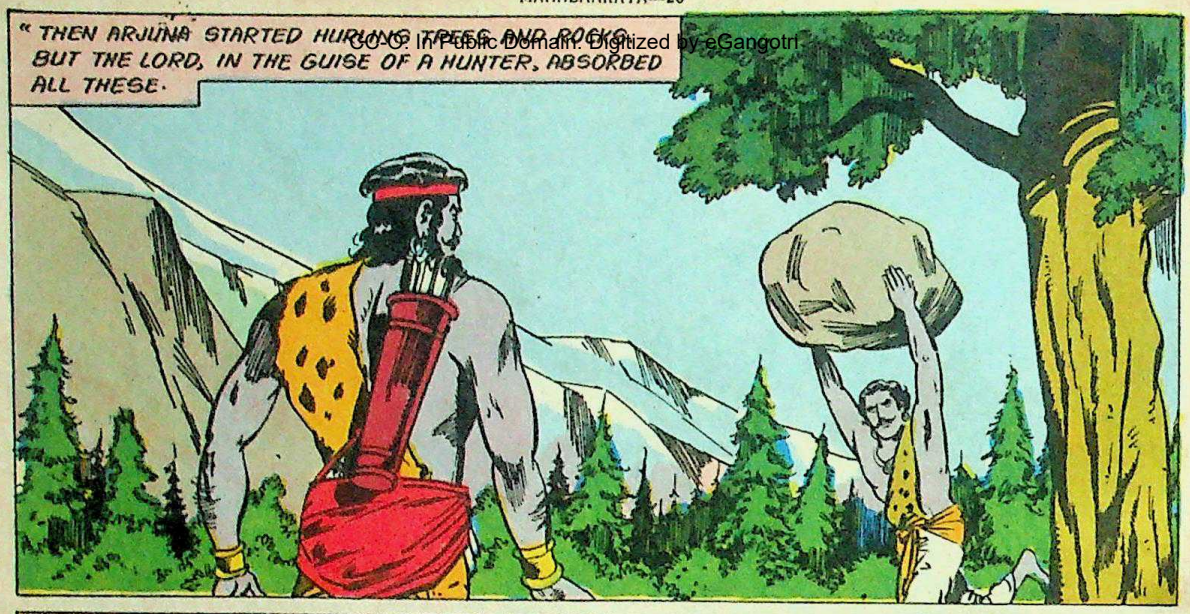

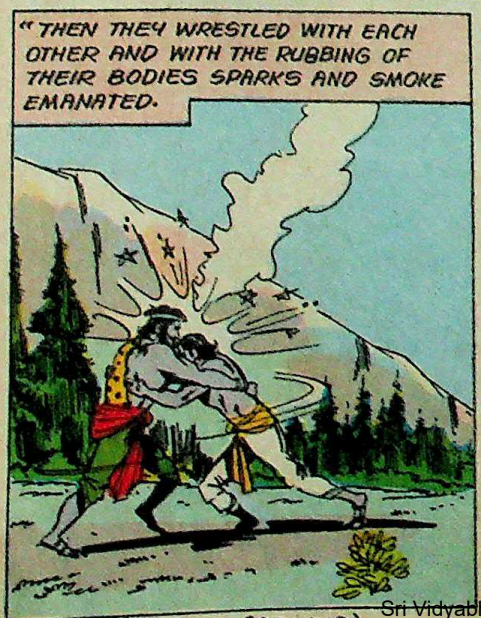

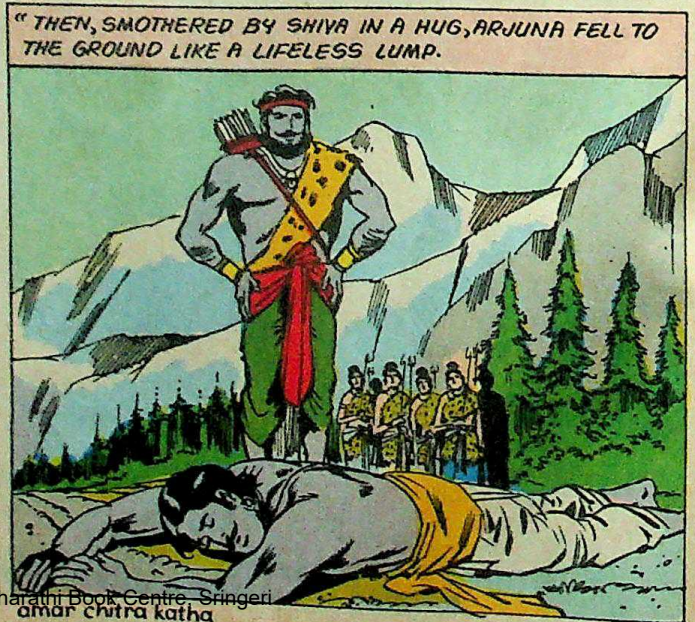

* SON OF PRITHA (ARJUNA)

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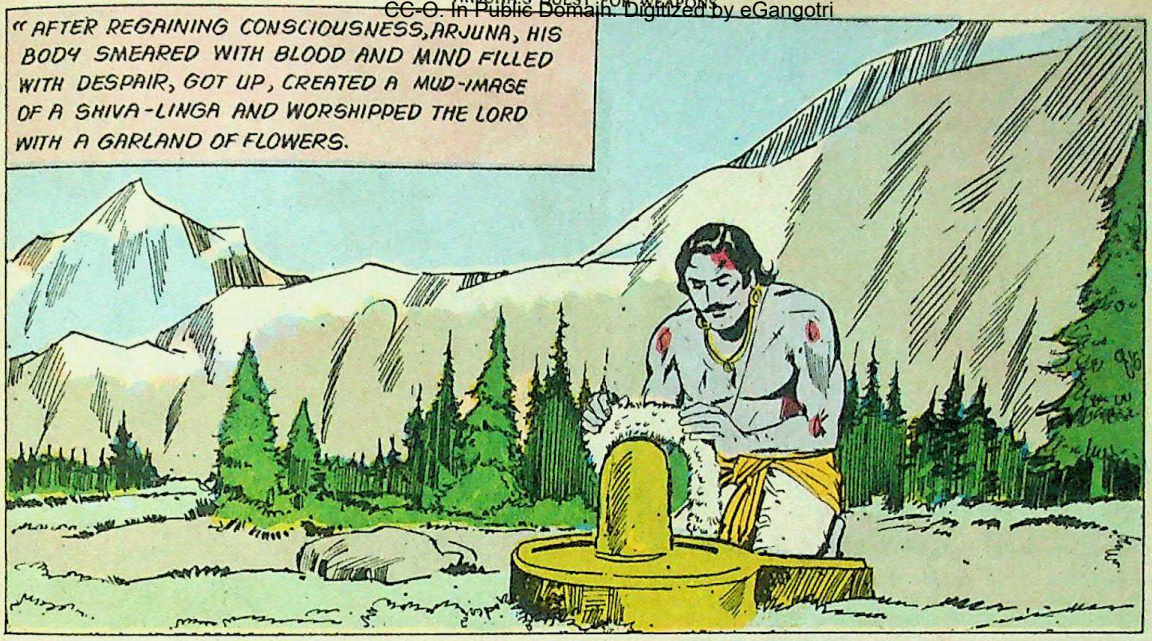

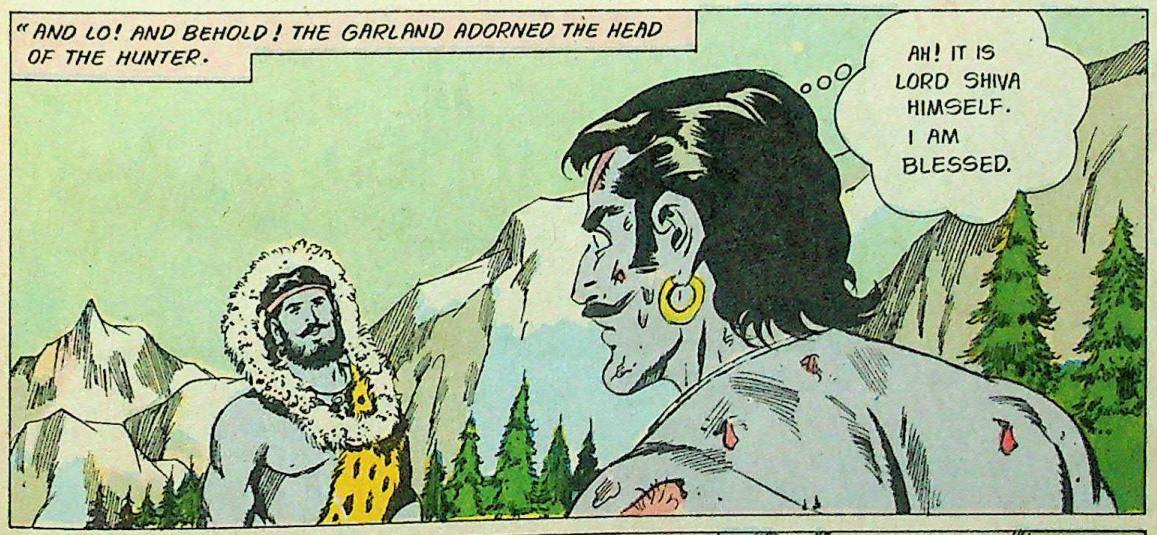

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* VISHNU

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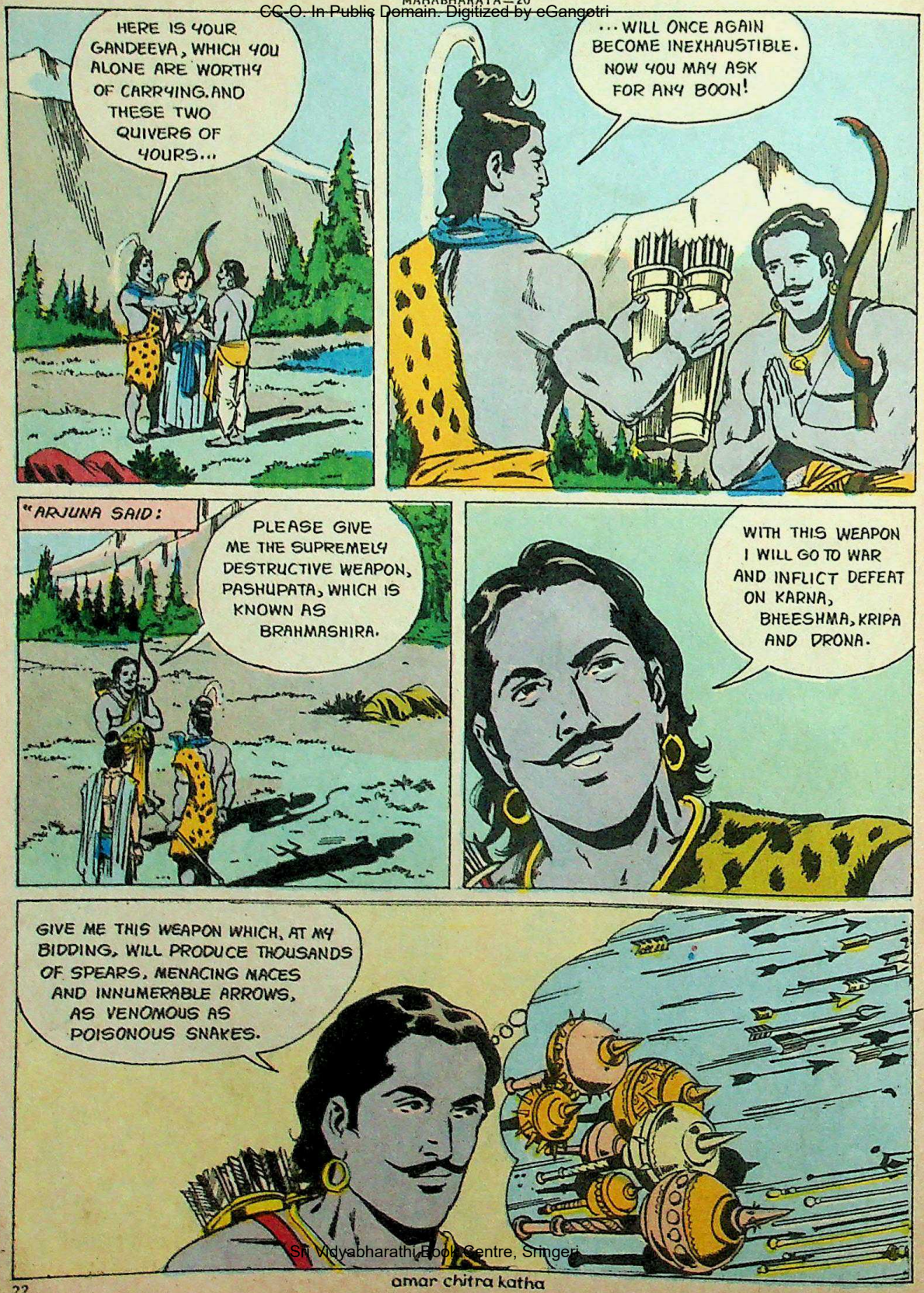

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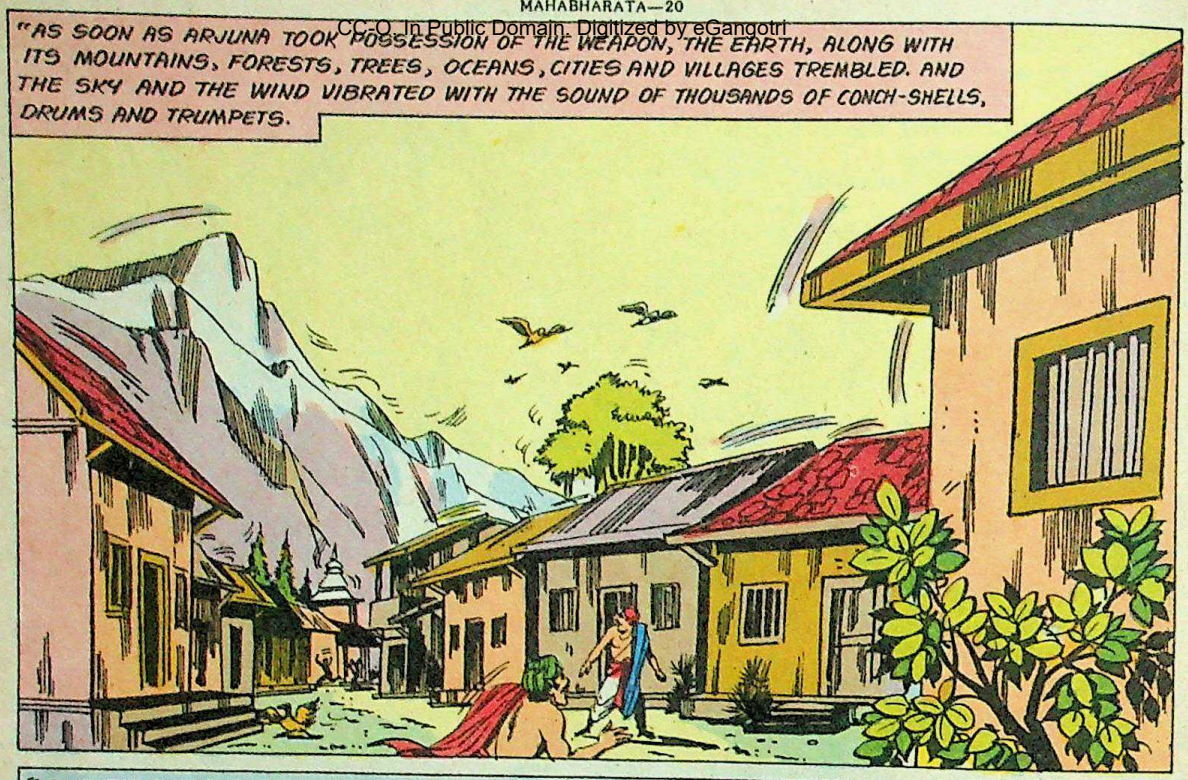

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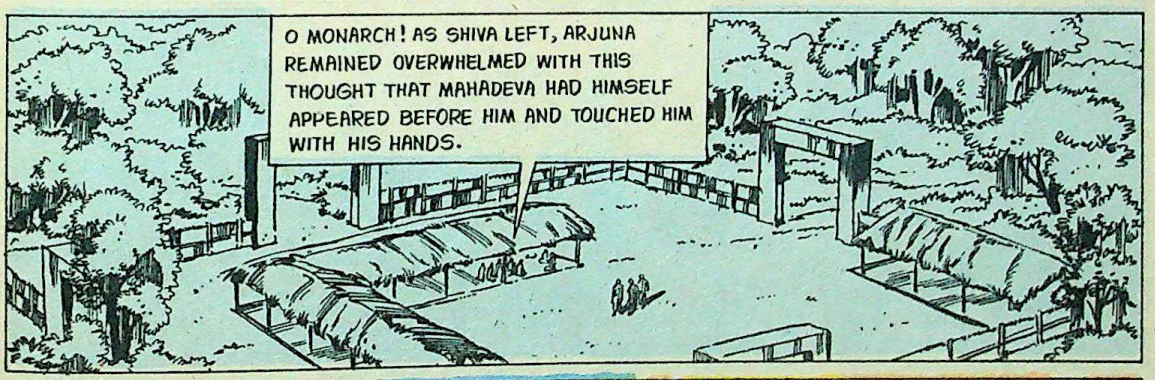

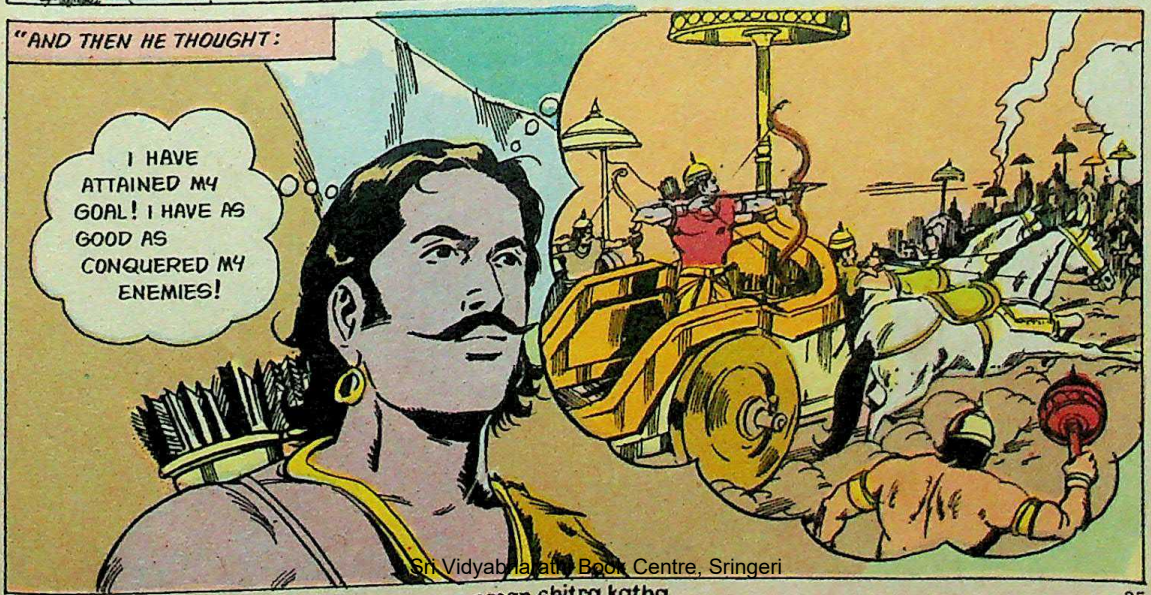

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AS THE ALL-POWERFUL PARTHA PONDERED THUS, VARUNA, THE LORD OF THE WATERS, APPEARED BEFORE HIM MAKING THE PLACE BRIGHT WITH THE GLOW OF HIS GEM-LIKE COMPLEXION.

"ALONG WITH HIM CAME THE AQUATIC ANIMALS, THE SNAKES, THE RULING GODS OF THE RIVERS, THE DAITYAS* AND THE SADHYAS*.

"THEN CAME KUBERA+, ON A RADIANT CHARIOT. HIS COMPLEXION WAS AS GOLDEN AS THE WATERS OF THE JAMBU RIVER. ALL THE YAKSHAS CAME WITH HIM.

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* DIFFERENT KINDS OF BEINGS + GOD OF WEALTH.

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"IN ANOTHER VIMANA* CAME YAMA, THE GOD OF DEATH, THE DESTROYER OF ALL THE CREATURES. HE, THE SON OF SURYA, CARRIED IN HIS HAND THE DANDA, THE ROD OF DESTINY, AND CAME WITH THE ANCESTRAL SPIRITS OF MEN, IN HUMAN FORMS.

"IMMEDIATELY AFTER THAT, CAME INDRA, THE KING OF DEVAS, RIDING ON HIS ELEPHANT AIRAVATA. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS CONSORT, INDRANI **, AND ALL THE DEVAS.

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* AERIAL CHARIOT ** SHACHI

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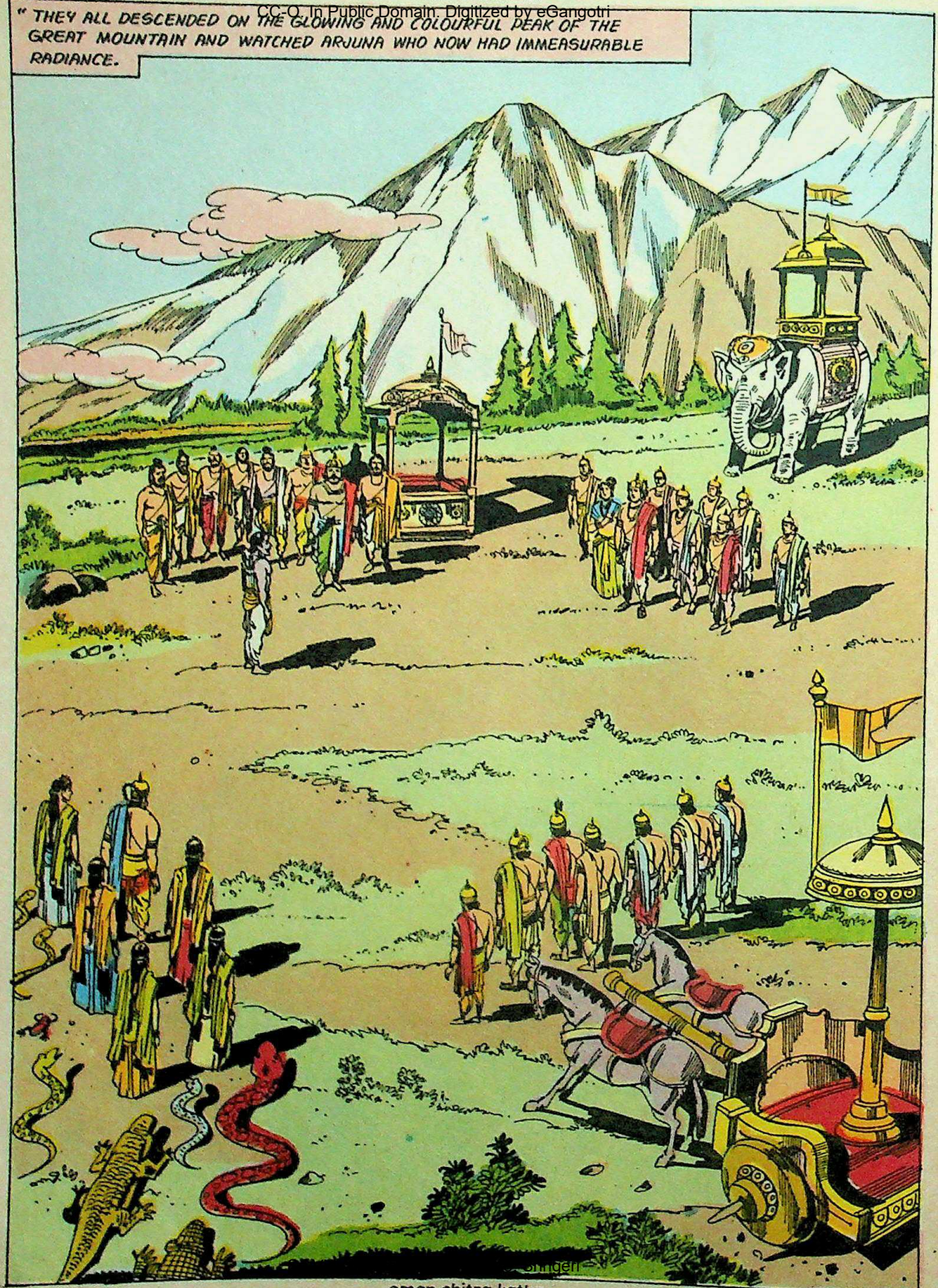
" THEY ALL DESCENDED ON THE GLOWING AND COLOURFUL PEAK OF THE GREAT MOUNTAIN AND WATCHED ARJUNA WHO NOW HAD IMMEASURABLE RADIANCE.



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* HEAVEN

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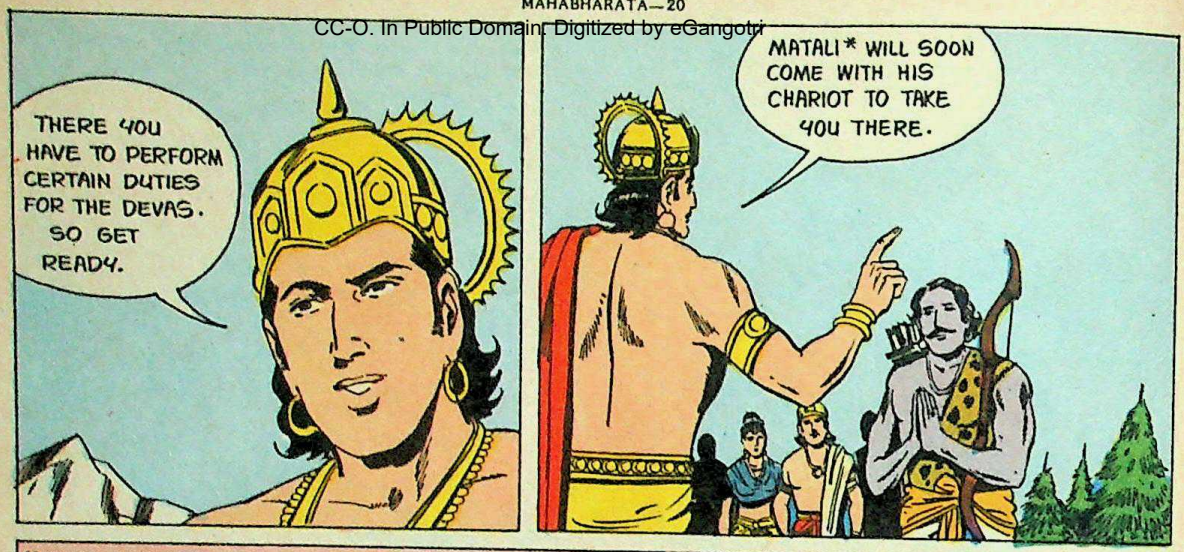

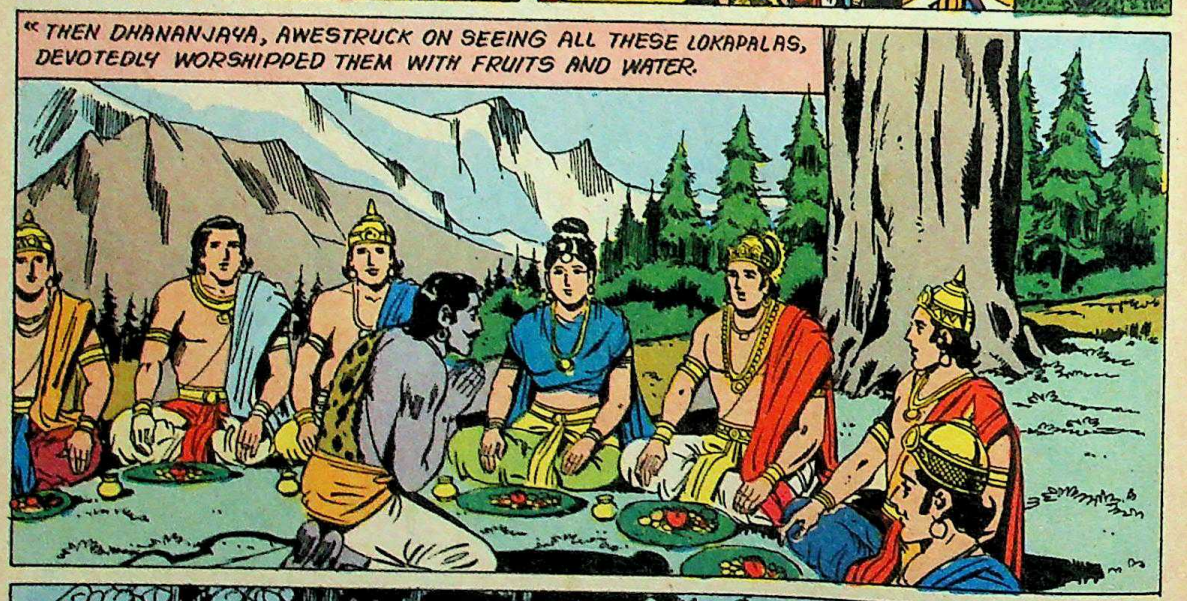

* CHARIOTEER OF INDRA

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